



The National Negro Business League

Louisville, Ky., August 18, 1909

“**T**HE need of an organization that will bring the colored people who are engaged in business together for consultation, and to secure information and inspiration from each other,” was emphasized by Dr. Booker T. Washington, in a letter dated June 15, 1900, calling a meeting for the organization of “a National Negro Business League,” to be held in Boston, August 23–24, 1900.

Dr. Washington said, “This meeting will present a great opportunity for us to show the world what progress we have made in business lines since our freedom.”

More than four hundred delegates, representing thirty-four states, responded to the call. The meeting was practical, enthusiastic, successful. The leading business men and women of the race were there, and from the moment that Dr. Samuel E. Courtney, of Boston, chairman of the local committee, called the company to order, to the closing word by Dr. Washington, who had been unanimously elected president of the new organization, there was an interest that betokened great good for the new force in the progress of the race. Business men and women became acquainted with each other and received not only information but inspiration.

The keynote of the meeting, and this has been the dominant note in all subsequent meetings, was sounded by Dr. Washington when he said: “This organization does not overlook the fact that mere material possessions are not, and should not be made, the chief end of life, but should be a means of aiding us in securing our rightful place as citizens and of enlarging our opportunities for securing that education and development which enhance our usefulness and produce that tenderness and goodness of heart which will make us live for the benefit of our fellowmen and for the promotion of our country’s highest welfare. No matter under what condition we may find ourselves surrounded, may we ever keep in mind that the law which recognizes and rewards merit, no matter under what skin found, is universal and eternal, and can no more be nullified than we can stop the life-giving influence of the daily sun.”

Dr. Washington has been president of the league since its formation, and has contributed to its work the strength and inspiration of his personality, his wonderful executive ability, and his intelligent appreciation of the needs of the race. Meetings of the National League following Boston have been in New York, 1901; Richmond, Va., 1902; Nashville, Tenn., 1903; Indian-